

Executive Summary for
THE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY VETERAN'S CENTER

On June 16, 2006, Governor Kaine issued Executive Order 19 (EO19) highlighting the importance of veterans and veteran's services in Virginia and setting forth the Commonwealth's policy for improving services to Virginia's veterans. Among the directives identified by the Governor is the request to identify opportunities to partner with the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) on ways to offer new, expanded or customized services.

In response to EO 19, Virginia Commonwealth University is proposing to develop the only university-based center focused exclusively on the needs of veterans, especially veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Veteran's Center is proposing to provide services in conjunction with the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center, Fort Lee, the Marine Corp Base at Quantico and the Naval Station at Norfolk, as well as various state agencies, such as the Department of Veteran Services and the Virginia National Guard. Some of these activities are:

- Implement programs to assist the readjustment process for veterans and their families. The programs are psycho-educational rather than illness-oriented and build on the soldiers' strengths rather than their problems.
- Work with businesses and educational institutions in the Commonwealth to offer work opportunities and training for returning veterans by serving as a training resource to assist these groups to better understand the needs of veterans and the many skill sets veterans have learned in combat.
- Work with Virginia's community colleges and other organizations such as Community Service Boards to train them how to deliver services to vets. Few potential providers understand what vets have experienced and very often confuse reintegration difficulties with psychopathology. By training others throughout the Commonwealth, we can reach vets who live in all areas;
- Conduct research with veterans and their families to determine the effectiveness of these programs and others that might be developed;
- Apply for foundation and federal grants to develop comprehensive research programs for veterans;
- Provide educational and training opportunities for graduate students and some undergraduate students on both VCU campuses to develop the knowledge and skills to work with returning veterans and to advocate for their needs; and
- Develop conferences and workshops to educate others in the Commonwealth and nationally about the needs of veterans and the successes of some of these programs.

The activities proposed do not conflict with the Veteran's Administration's efforts to serve those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other psychopathology. Additional detail about the rationale for the Center and the proposed plans are presented in the body of the proposal.